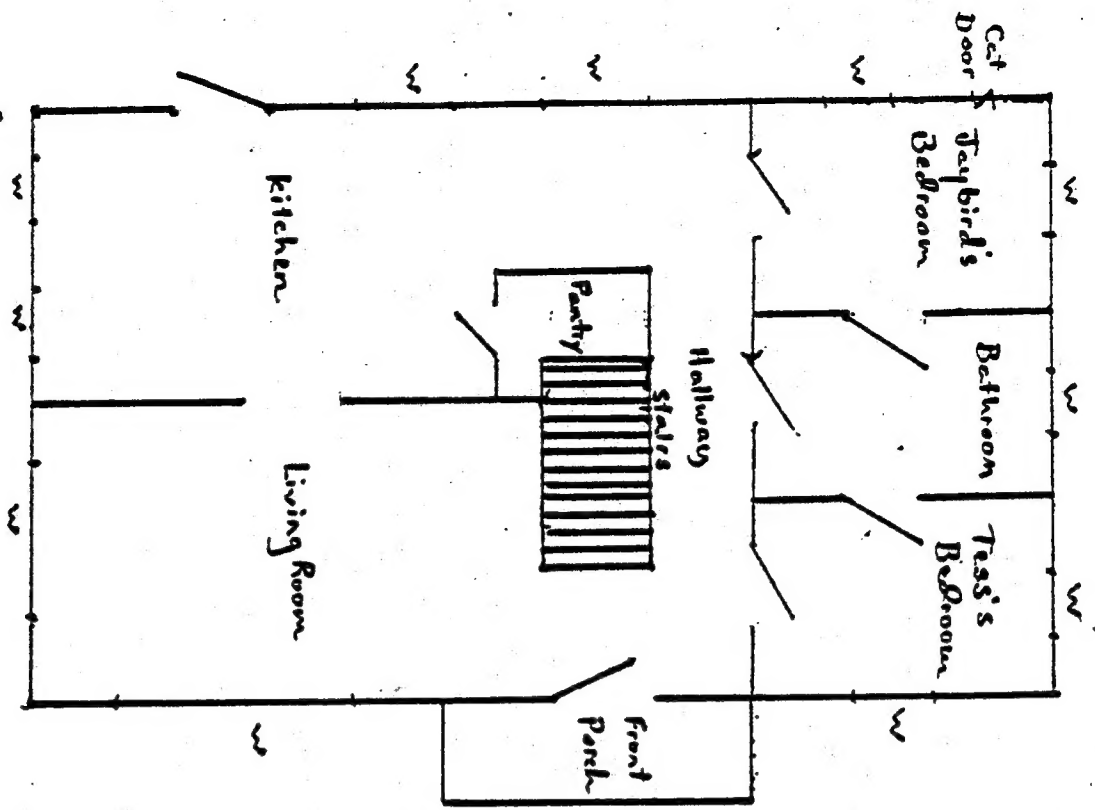
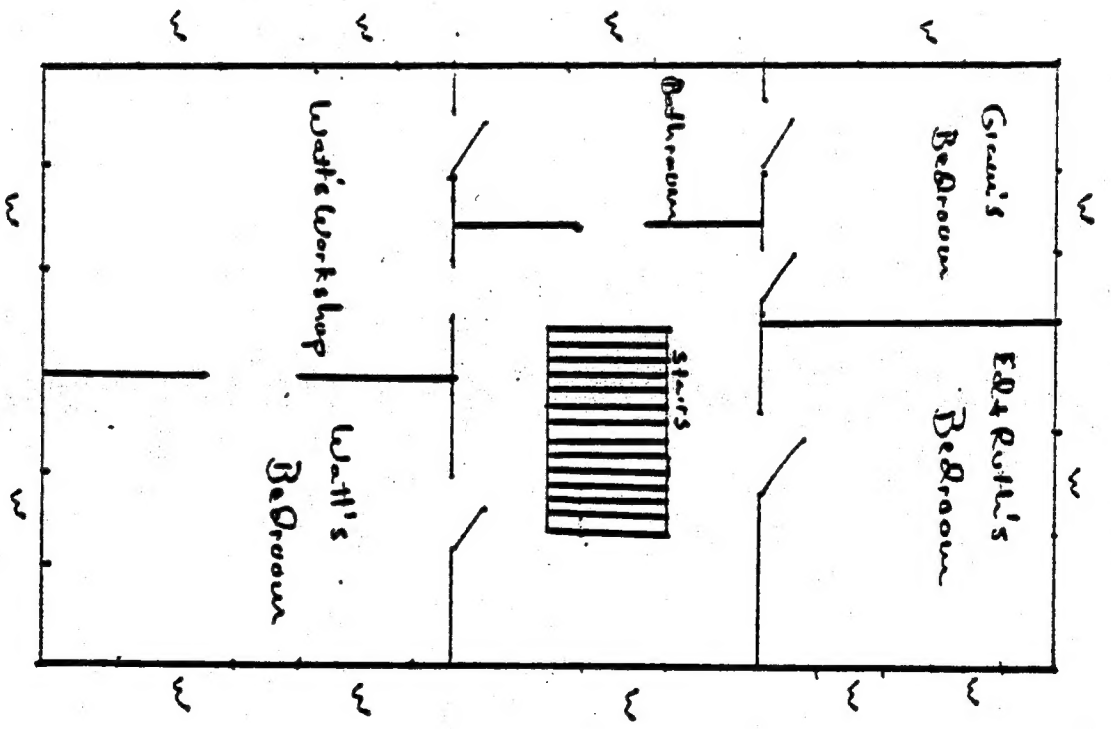


NIGHT SKIES

screenplay by  
John Sayles



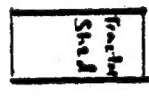
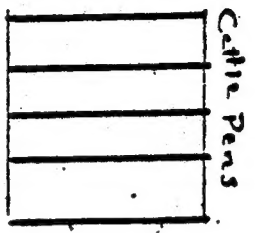
1ST FLOOR



2ND FLOOR

FLOOR PLAN, RANCH HOUSE

↖  
Range

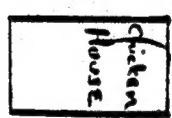


YARD



Main Road

Range ↗



RANCH BUILDING LAY-OUT

1

## FIELD

We are in a rugged, imposing terrain- mounds of earth, rocks, huge plants. We TRACK through it till we come upon a FIELD MOUSE and for the first time understand the scale of what we've been seeing. It is early morning, dew still clinging to the grass. We FOLLOW the mouse as it darts warily through the grass. It stops, lifts its head to listen for a moment. A faint shadow drifts over it, then drifts off. The mouse spurts away in terror-

WHAM!

It is snatched from our sight from above, scooped by a feathered blur with an air-shattering swoop-

CUT TO:

2

## SKY

We're in the air, the HAWK surrounded by blue sky as it flies with the mouse vised in its claws. We FOLLOW it till it flutters down to land on a fence-post. It looks around, then dips its head to pick at the mouse. There is a sudden, strange PITCH-CHANGING NOISE. The hawk cocks its head to listen, then flaps away. We TRACK down along the barbed-wire fence, the wires quivering to give off the eerie sound. We hear a distant RAPPING as we clear a little rise- in front of us there stretches another quarter mile of fence dividing the rangeland. A dirt road cuts through the fence. There is a pickup truck parked by a gate with two figures by it. One hammers at a fence post and the other sits on the ground.

CUT TO:

3

## GATE

Closer. TESS, in her late teens, is driving a fence post into the ground with a huge mallet, the tautened wire quivering and SINGING with each blow. The radio BLARES from the pickup, someone quoting the morning hog prices.

JAYBIRD, a boy of about ten with a strange, inner-focussed look in his eyes, sits on the ground with Tess's toolbox open before him. He has neatly arranged all her tools- wrenches, pliers, screwdrivers, everything- into even rows and patterns on the grass

3

cont.

and is absorbed in playing with her spring-loaded tape measure. He pulls the blades out exactly six feet, then watches deadpan as it zips back into the case when he pushes the button.

Tess gives the post a last whack, tests its sturdiness, then calls to Jaybird-

TESS

Jaybird, you wanna put that stuff away now. We gotta go.

Jaybird doesn't attend to her. He keeps zipping the tape measure. Tess kneels by him and repacks the tools in the box. She gently takes the tape from his hand, packs it, and lugs the box away.

TESS

C'mon into the pickup, Jaybird.

Jaybird sits staring while Tess walks off, as if slowly realizing he doesn't have the tape measure anymore. He begins to flap his hands and shake his head, eyes out of focus, then stops abruptly. Tess appears to take him by the hand and lead him away.

TESS

C'mon, honey.

CUT TO:

4

ROAD, EXT. PICKUP

the truck speeding across rolling Montana rangeland, low mountains in the distance-

CUT TO:

5

INT. PICKUP

Tess hums quietly while Jaybird jerks his head to follow each telephone pole they whizz past.

TESS

You wanna ride that rocket ship when we get there?

Jaybird continues fanning his head at the poles.

TESS

(quietly) Course you do.

CUT TO:

6

## EXT. STORE

Spradlin's Package and General Store. Signs advertising Coors and Oly, a Greyhound sticker above the bus bench, a special on Tombstone Frozen Pizza. A middle-aged Indian man, MR. BULLBEAR, sits on the bench with a suitcase beside him. There are gas pumps out front, self-serve, and a post-office box. An outpost for people who don't have time to drive all the way to town.

Tess drives up, she gets out, opens the door for Jaybird. He walks straight to the rocketship bucking machine that is mounted on the porch and climbs aboard. He is far too big for it. He sits looking straight ahead. Tess passes and plops a dime in the slot and the machine begins to rock. Bullbear watches Jaybird.

TESS

Morning, Mr. Bullbear.

BULLBEAR

Morning.

CUT TO:

7

## INT. STORE

Tess goes inside. She nods to SPRADLIN who is yawning and shuffling around the cookies and crackers sale display in his slippers. He opens a box of animal crackers off the shelf and begins to eat them as he watches Tess fill a wire basket with baking staples.

SPRADLIN

You see that thing on last night about insects?

TESS

What?

SPRADLIN

The TV show about bugs. About how they got their own armies and politics and social order and how when we blow ourselves up it'll be them that take over.

TESS

I didn't see it.

SPRADLIN

Great stuff. Lots of close-ups of em eating each other.

cont.

7  
cont.

A ranch hand, BURRIS, enters and stands by the register-

BURRIS  
Packa Luckies.

SPRADLIN  
Sure.

BURRIS  
(nods to porch) What's Big Chief  
Shitinabucket doin out there?

SPRADLIN  
Goin to Rapid.

BURRIS  
I'm pissed off at that brother of his.  
That dog he sold me died.

SPRADLIN  
What from?

BURRIS  
Got hit by a car. Run right in front  
of it.

SPRADLIN  
Oh.

BURRIS  
Man sold me a brain-damaged animal.

CUT TO:

8

EXT. STORE

Jaybird is still rocking on the machine when Tess comes  
out with an armful of groceries.

TESS  
You still on that thing?

BULLBEAR  
I put another dime in.

TESS  
Thanks.

CONT.

8

cont.

Bullbear watches Jaybird ride the rocket.

BULLBEAR  
I hear you're goin off to music school.

TESS  
No. I decided not to.

BULLBEAR  
Oh.

TESS  
I got to take care of my brother.

Bullbear squints at Jaybird.

BULLBEAR  
He gettin any better?

TESS  
Sure. I been working with him.

BULLBEAR  
He talk yet?

TESS  
No.

BULLBEAR  
Can he count?

TESS  
No.

The rocket ride stops. Jaybird sits there.

BULLBEAR  
You hear about that thing where they found the grazin stock all cut up?

TESS  
On TV?

BULLBEAR  
Naw, just last night. Out to Jim Turley's place.

CUT TO:



9

## ROADSIDE, TURLEY RANCH

Tess's pickup kicks gravel as it slides to a stop by a half-dozen cars and pickups parked on the side of a ranch road, one of them the county sheriff's car. She hurries Jaybird out of the truck with her and they head up a hill toward a cluster of men-

CUT TO:

10

## HILLTOP

A half-circle of men, Tess's father ED, two ranchers, TURLEY and OSBORN, SHERIFF LOVE and his son VON, looking down at something on the ground, faces grim-

OSBORN

Damndest thing I ever saw.

TURLEY

There's two others they done worse than that to.

CUT TO:

11

## COW

A dead cow lies on its side on the grass. The skin on its neck, from shoulders to chin, has been skillfully removed, leaving the membrane and nerves beneath intact. A perfect circle of skin about the circumference of a grapefruit has been removed from its forehead. Its genitals have been sliced out.

CUT TO:

12

## HILLTOP

Tess comes to stand by her father. She whispers-

TESS

Daddy?

ED

What're you doin here?

TESS

They told me at the store.

Jaybird stares at the circle on the cow's forehead. He focuses, totally rapt.

cont.

12

cont.

TURLEY

You ask me it was one of those hoodoo outfits. Black magic people- cuttin their sexual apparatus off like that.

LOVE

There's not much to go by, Jim.

TURLEY

I read about a bunch that lives in Missoula-

ED

(to Tess) What'd you bring him for?

TESS

He likes to get out of the house.

ED

He doesn't know the difference.

We hear a HELICOPTER approaching. They look up-

CUT TO:

13

COPTER

A helicopter settles down a little ways off from them, by a pair of cattle carcasses-

CUT TO:

14

HILLTOP

We FOLLOW as the men move toward the copter, ducking low under the wash-

OSBORN

They got here quick.

LOVE

I got a special number for this kind of stuff.

Von catches Tess's eye, he comes to walk by her.

TESS

What're you doing back?

cont

14

cont.

VON  
Semester break. Thought I'd come  
home and visit.

TESS  
Lucky us.

VON  
You want to go out tonight?

TESS  
(shrugs) Maybe.

VON  
Come on, Tess, don't be that way.

CUT TO:

15

COPTER

Two Air Force investigators, JERRY and SAM, hop out of  
the copter to shake hands with Sheriff Love-

JERRY  
These haven't been moved since you  
found them, have they?

LOVE  
No sir.

SAM  
Who saw the lights?

TURLEY  
One was kind of red and one was  
white. Didn't hear any noise so I  
figured they were on foot. Not a  
trace of anybody when I got here  
though, just these three all cut up.

Sam kneels by a steer that has been mutilated in the  
same fashion as the other.

SAM  
This is the furthest north they've  
come.

cont.

15

cont.

TURLEY

The rest of the stock was just standing around like nothing had happened.

SAM

(to Sheriff Love) It's been a pretty steady progression of these things, moving up from the south.

TURLEY

I say it's black magic people, hypnotized em.

CUT TO:

16

HILLTOP

Tess, walking with Von, reacts as she sees the third steer-

TESS

Oh my God.

CUT TO:

17

THIRD CARCASS, MEN

Ed, Osborn and Love look on as Jerry examines the third cow. All the flesh from the base of its neck up is gone, only a cleanly picked skeletal neck and skull are left.

ED

It's just sick, is all.

OSBORN

You see that thing on TV last night? About those army ants?

LOVE

We don't have army ants in Montana, Willis.

OSBORN

But they could have done this. Strip you to the bone in a snap.

JERRY

I don't think they would have scooped out the cow's udder and then repacked it with sand.

cont.

17

cont.

LOVE

Jesus.

ED

It's sick. That's all. Sick.

CUT TO:

18

SECOND CARCASS, MEN

Sam speaks to Jaybird who is sitting at the second cow's head, steadily tracing his finger around and around the missing circle of flesh-

SAM

Son? You want to get away from there? Son?

ED

(annoyed) Tess! Get him, will you?

Tess pulls Jaybird away from the cow. He continues to stare at the circle. Osborn speaks to Sam-

OSBORN

He's all right. He's just- you know-

TURLEY

He's different.

TESS

(to Jaybird) C'mon, you stay away from that.

CUT TO:

19

THIRD CARCASS

Jerry is taking snapshots of the third cow-

LOVE

You people have any ideas what might be behind all this?

JERRY

We're just as much in the dark as the average citizen.

cont.

19 cont.

(hostile) <sup>ED</sup> In the dark, my ass.

Jerry and Ed exchange a look. Jerry takes another snapshot.

CUT TO:

20 COW HEAD

a last look at the eerily grinning cow skull.

CUT TO:

21 KITCHEN TO BACK YARD

A knife saws around the anus of a freshly-plucked chicken. A hand reaches in and begins to pull out its internal organs. RUTH, Tess's mother, is in a fairly modern kitchen cleaning the chicken while GRAM, her mother-in-law, chops things for stuffing.

GRAM  
I'm onna need two eggs for this.

RUTH  
There's some in the refrigerator.

GRAM  
Used em for breakfast.

Ruth docilely puts the chicken down and rinses her hands off-

GRAM  
Biggest ones you can find.

RUTH  
Uh-huh.

We FOLLOW Ruth out to the back yard. We can see some of the ranch buildings as she walks- a large chicken house, tractor shed, empty cattle pens in the distance. Ruth heads for the chicken house. She stops abruptly, closes her eyes and presses her fingers to her eyeballs, wincing from a migraine. It passes.

cont.

21

cont.

RUTH

Thank you, Lord.

She continues toward the chicken house-

CUT TO:

22

INT. CHICKEN HOUSE

WATT, Tess's younger teenaged brother, sits on a chair improvised out of feed sacks, reading a Heavy Metal comic book and listening to music from a top-forties station on his portable radio. There is an old piano next to him. The sunlight from outside blasts in as Ruth opens the barn door and enters. Watt quickly turns the music down and lays the magazine aside-

RUTH

You almost done cleaning in here?

WATT

Yeah. Just taking a break.

RUTH

What's that you're reading?

WATT

(quietly) Heavy Metal.

Ruth gives him a look and goes to the egg trough at the base of the coops. She starts sorting through the eggs-

WATT

It's not dirty or anything. It's sort of like Popular Mechanics.

RUTH

Comic books.

Watt drags to his feet and pulls a pair of rubber gloves on.

RUTH

And you shouldn't be blasting that music around the livestock.

WATT

Tess plays her piano in here.

cont.

22

cont.

RUTH

That's different. That's music.

Watt grabs a wheelbarrow full of chicken-shitty hay and bangs out into the yard. We FOLLOW him across the yard toward a compost bin. He calls out-

WATT

Kelso! C'mon, buddy-

KELSO, a black and white border collie, happily runs to join Watt. They walk a moment, then Watt stops to watch a jet cross the sky high over head.

WATT

Can't even see a goddam chicken from up there.

We hear Tess's pickup as she wheels it into the yard and skids to a stop. She hops out, leaving Jaybird sitting inside, and rushes to Watt-

TESS

You know that thing you read me where they found those cattle? They just had one up at Turley's!

WATT

Mutilations?

TESS

Cut their whole face off and took their sex parts out. Turley found em last night.

WATT

(excited) People from the Dog Star.

TESS

What?

WATT

In that article I showed you there was a guy who got scooped up and the people who took him said they were from the Dog Star.

TESS

He was a crackpot.

cont.



22

cont.

WATT

How do you know that?

TESS

(hurries off) I gotta tell Momma and Gram-

WATT

Was there scorch marks on the grass or anything? Did they see lights? Wait!

Watt hurries after Tess-

CUT TO:

23

PICKUP

Jaybird sits in the car. The radio is off, but he pushes the punch buttons- One, two, three, four, five, six- then starts at the beginning, over and over. We hear Ed's car pull up-

CUT TO:

24

YARD

Ed gets out of his car. He scowls at the wheelbarrow full of dreck left sitting in the middle of the yard. He sees Jaybird sitting alone in the pickup. He opens the door-

ED

Come on out of there.

Jaybird doesn't attend. Ed takes him by the arm awkwardly, obviously not used to having to deal with the boy, and leads him toward the house.

CUT TO:

25

KITCHEN

Tess, Watt and Ruth sit at the kitchen table, Ruth looking shaken, while Gram cracks and stirs a pair of eggs into her stuffing-

RUTH

It's filthy-

cont.

25

cont.

TESS

Mr. Turley thinks it's some sort of religious cult.

RUTH

I heard there's some of those Satan people in Missoula.

GRAM

I think it's Indians.

WATT

Gram-

GRAM

Who else'd be squirrely enough to pull a stunt like that.

WATT

It's extraterrestrial beings. They're doing field research.

RUTH

I wish you'd stop reading those trash magazines.

WATT

I wish they'd take me off to the Dog Star and get me out of this joint.

TESS

Oh my God-

Ed herds Jaybird in through the door to the yard-

TESS

I left him in the pickup.

RUTH

Is it true, Ed?

Watt ruffles Jaybird's hair as he passes in a beeline to his room-

WATT

Hiya, Einstein.

TESS

Don't call him that. He's probably smarter than all of us.

cont.

25

cont.

ED

They killed three of Turley's  
Hereford's.

WATT

He's so smart why can't he write his  
own name?

RUTH

Do they know who did it?

TESS

You're so smart how come you're  
sixteen years old and still  
shovelin chickshit?

RUTH

Tess-

TESS

Sorry, Momma.

ED

You ask me it's the government and  
those agribusiness people trying to  
put something over. Choking the little  
man off sn't fast enough for em- they  
mean to scare us out.

WATT

The government's afraid to tell people  
what they know cause it would cause a  
panic.

ED

You got some unfinished business in  
the chicken house, Mister. And the  
fence is down by the transformers.

WATT

Again?

ED

Take the post-hole digger this time  
and do it right.

Watt gets up to leave-

TESS

Don't be too long with the pickup.

cont.

25

cont.

WATT

Anybody else with some orders for me?

ED

Don't be smart.

RUTH

Who could do a thing like that?  
Poor Mr. Turley-

Watt leaves, Ed calls after him-

ED

And don't let that dog of yours run  
the cattle!

There is a moment of silence-

GRAM

They see any Indians near the scene  
of the crime?

CUT TO:

26

RANGE, POWER LINES

Watt jams the point of a post-hole digger into an old, half-collapsed hole. He looks around him. He is alone but for Kelso lying on the grass, pickup parked by a section of sagging barbed-wire that abuts a series of high-tension power lines. The lines give off a nervous BUZZ, creating STATIC on the pickup radio, tuned to a MUSIC station.

There is nothing but empty range as far as Watt can see. The sky is totally clear, the sun glaring. Watt is sweating, he leans on the digger, gives it a twist-

CUT TO:

27

INT. TESS'S BEDROOM

a mixture of cowgirl and classical, 4H Club trophies mixed with framed pictures and reviews of her piano concerts. Tess sits contemplating an empty suitcase. She gets up and we FOLLOW her through a connecting door to Jaybird's eerily neat bedroom. There is a small fish tank, an unpricked dartboard and a two-way cat door at the base of the outer wall. Tess sits at a small card-table across from Jaybird, who studies the checkerboard

cont.

27

cont.

in between them. Tess makes the first move-

TESS

I'm red and you're black.

Jaybird takes the piece Tess moved and slides it back to its original place-

TESS

No, honey. I move the red and you move the black. It's real easy. Here-

Tess moves her piece again and then moves one of Jaybird's front line to counter it-

TESS

Like that, see?

Jaybird quickly puts the pieces back where they started

TESS

The point isn't to keep them straight, it's to take the other person's piece. Take, right?

She palms one of the black pieces off the board. Jaybird tugs her hand.

TESS

It's all right, you get it back when the game is over-

Jaybird continues to tug for the piece. FRITZ, a medium-sized cat, slithers in through the cat-door and leaps onto the board, scattering the pieces-

TESS

Fritz! Get offa there!

Tess tosses Fritz onto Jaybird's bed. Jaybird sees the scrambled board and freaks, beginning to flap his hands and shake his head. Tess grabs him by the face with both hands-

cont.

27

cont.

TESS

Don't do that. Dammit, will you stop that?

Jaybird stops abruptly, staring into her eyes. Tess is in tears-

TESS

Oh, honey. What am I gonna do with you?

Jaybird sits on the floor and begins to spin the checkers, over and over. Tess sighs. We FOLLOW her back to her room. She closes the suitcase and kicks in under her bed.

CUT TO:

28

RANGE

We see Watt working the digger from a distance-

CUT TO:

29

RANGE

Closer. He is sweating heavily, rock BLARING from the pickup radio, the BUZZ of the power lines voicing Watt's mood. There is a surge in both the radio and the electrical hum. Watt looks around, puzzled, then goes and turns the radio off. He looks at the transformer.

CUT TO:

30

TRANSFORMER, WATT'S POV

the lines buzzing like angry hornets-

CUT TO:

31

WATT

He goes back to his digging. As he pauses to wipe the sweat from his face we see a large, amorphous shadow drifting toward him from behind, rippling as it crosses the range.

CUT TO:

32

WATT

Digging. The power lines take a huge dip, the buzz almost inaudible. Watt stares at them. He is suddenly enveloped in darkness. He looks up-

CUT TO:

33

CLOUD, WATT'S POV

a dark, threatening, red-tinged cloud has parked overhead-

CUT TO:

34

KELSO

the dog growls up at the cloud, terrified, then runs to hide underneath the pickup-

CUT TO:

35

WATT

uneasy. He drops the post-hole digger and starts to move backwards, watching the cloud. He looks for the edge of the shadow, and begins to walk toward it. The edge moves ahead of him. He trots, then runs but the cloud moves with him, keeping him in an eerie darkness. He stops, out of breath and scared-

CUT TO:

36

LONG SHOT, WATT &amp; CLOUD

from a distance we see Watt standing under a single dark cloud in a perfectly clear sky. The cloud is low, tree-top level-

CUT TO:

37

WATT

looks up at the cloud. Suddenly a beam of extremely white light flashes down from the cloud, dazzling him for a moment before he starts to run back to the pickup. The darkness stays with him till he leaps into the front seat and turns the ignition key. Nothing. He checks the gearshift, pumps the gas, tries to start it again- nothing. He looks out the window-

CUT TO:

38 FIELD, WATT'S POV  
the field around him is sunny again-

CUT TO:

39 WATT

reacting. He opens the door warily, steps out, looks around. Kelso comes out from under the pickup, tail between his legs, and hops into the front seat-

CUT TO:

40 LONG SHOT, WATT, PICKUP  
the sky totally clear now-

CUT TO:

41 WATT

calming down, then VROOM! he leaps away as the pickup engine and radio blast into life behind him. He runs away a few feet, then gingerly creeps back and gets into the pickup. He turns the radio and engine off the restarts the engine at a lower idle, and patches out for home-

CUT TO:

42 KITCHEN

Ed, Ruth, Tess, Gram and Jaybird sit around the kitchen table for lunch. Ruth says grace-

RUTH

For the fruits of thy fields and the  
intercession of thy love, we thank thee,  
Lord.

FAMILY

Amen.

They begin to eat. Jaybird gulps a few bites down, then is distracted by a honey jar lid which he starts to spin on the tabletop, over and over.

ED

He waltzes in late and expects lunch  
he's got another think comin.

RUTH

It's hard work.

cont.



42

cont.

GRAM

The tomatoes aren't much yet, are they?

ED

Probably out there listening to his radio. Or smoking that marijuana business like his friend who got caught there.

TESS

Richie Washburn wasn't his friend.

ED

Can't you make him stop that?

Tess takes the lid from Jaybird. He flaps his hands for a moment. Tess tries to feed him a forkful of lunch but he pushes it away. She puts the food down and goes back to her own. Ed looks on uncomfortably.

TESS

He'll eat if he's hungry.

ED

I talked with Mrs. Flanders again. About the State Home.

TESS

No.

ED

He's better off there. You can't be throwing your life away on him.

TESS

He's getting better. As soon as he can take care of himself-

GRAM

My best friend in grammar school had an idiot boy for a brother. Drowned himself in a well.

TESS

He doesn't belong in an institution. Momma-

RUTH

The Lord willed him to be the way he is, the Lord will send us guidance.

cont.

42

cont.

ED

I hope he sends us the tuition for  
that State Home while he's at it.

We hear Watt pull up outside-

GRAM

That'll be Watt.

ED

He'll start with the lame excuses  
the minute he hits the door, just  
you watch.

Watt bangs in out of breath, looks at them all  
dramatically-

WATT

I just had an extra-terrestrial encounter.

ED

You're late.

WATT

I saw one. A UFO hanging right over  
the pickup. Tried to take me away.

ED

Why didn't you invite em to lunch?

WATT

I'm serious! It was just hanging  
there above me-

TESS

What'd it look like?

WATT

It looked- well, it was inside this  
cloud, see, and this light come down-

RUTH

It's a miracle-

ED

Don't you start, Ruthie. Neighbors  
think we're all soft-headed as it is-

WATT

I saw it! I tried to run but it stood  
right above me!

cont.

42

cont.

ED  
(suspicious) You been seeing that  
Washburn kid?

WATT  
What?

TESS  
He thinks you're stoned.

ED  
Let's see your eyes-

WATT  
Jesus Christ-

RUTH  
Watt-

WATT  
Look, I'm telling the truth-

ED  
Dammit, I don't want to hear any more!

RUTH  
Ed-

ED  
That was prime stock Turley lost, this  
is nothing to play around with! You  
don't do a lick of work around here,  
you've got your head in the goddam  
clouds-

Ruth puts down her fork and exits to her room-

ED  
Dammit, Ruth, don't you walk away from  
this!

TESS  
Maybe he did see something.

ED  
All he saw was a way out of the work  
I sent him to do.

WATT  
It just hung there, didn't make a  
sound-

cont.

42

cont.

ED

I don't want to hear any more of that trash. Understand?

Watt shuts up, sits. He and Tess glare at Ed. Jaybird begins to spin the lid again. Ed looks at the three of them.

ED

Damn.

He gets up and stomps out into the yard.

WATT

First it made the power lines go haywire then it came over me and a light shone down.

TESS

(to Gram) What do you think?

GRAM

I think it's from your great-grandfather Pierce. He took crazy in his twenties and started to dig in the garden like a gopher. Sometimes it skips a generation or two.

CUT TO:

43

## INT. CHICKEN HOUSE

Chickens squawk and flutter and peck at Jaybird's fingers as he reaches into their coop to take their eggs. He doesn't notice, intent on his work. He methodically picks up eggs from where they lay and arranges them in egg cartons, pleased by the geometric ordering-

Suddenly the chickens stop still and cock their heads to listen to something we can't hear. We MOVE IN to Jaybird to see that he's listening too, eyes clear, attentive, as if receiving instructions.

The spell is broken as the chickens begin to squawk in distress and Jaybird is overtaken by a spasm of handflapping and headshaking. He begins to run in rapid, tight circles, faster and faster, making a high-pitched noise, sending an egg flying across the room to smash against a post. He falls to his knees, shakes his head to clear it, and looks around to see where he is.

CUT TO:

44

RANGE

Ed and Watt, on horseback, approach a dozen cattle. Watt is sulking. Now and then he looks up at the sky, searching. Kelso trots along beside them. Ed points to a large calf-

ED

That's the one.

WATT

Kelso! (points) That one!

Kelso barks and chases and cuts the calf away from the others. Ed and Watt dismount, Watt holding the horses as Ed examines the calf's eye. It is reddish, infected-

ED

We'll have to isolate it in the pen till we can get the doctor out here.

WATT

I want to join the Air Force.

ED

What?

WATT

I want to join the Air Force.

ED

You're not old enough.

WATT

I am if you sign the permission forms.

ED

I won't.

WATT

Then I'll join next year.

ED

No you won't.

WATT

I hate ranching. I hate it.

ED

(looks at him) No you don't.

Ed goes back to examining the calf-

cont.

44 cont.

WATT  
(whispers to himself) I saw  
something. I did.

CUT TO:

45 INT. CHICKEN HOUSE

Tess plays a difficult Chopin piece as Jaybird stands on Watt's pile of grain sacks watching the innards of the piano work-

CUT TO:

46 JAYBIRD

watching the strings and hammers, fascinated-

CUT TO:

47 CHICKENS

cocking their heads to listen-

CUT TO:

48 TESS

playing beautifully, absorbed. She finishes, sits back. She looks at Jaybird who watches the piano guts waiting for them to move again-

TESS  
That was Chopin.

Von opens the door to the barn, light flooding in. He smiles-

VON  
Entertaining the poultry again?

TESS  
Hi.

VON  
You want to go for a ride?

TESS  
Yeah. I guess so.

cont.

48

cont.

Tess gets up and we FOLLOW her and Von out into the yard. Von's shiny new Transam is parked in the yard. Tess is edgy with Von-

TESS

I heard you got a new one. Bet it impresses the hell out of all those girls you see.

VON

All what girls?

Jaybird bursts out of the barn and sprints by them-

VON

Where's he going?

TESS

God knows. He just figured out that the piano wasn't gonna start up again. I used to think he liked the music but all it means to him is the insides will be moving and he loves to watch.

VON

You get yourself another boyfriend since I been gone?

TESS

Nope. Wait here- I got to go to the stable before we can leave.

VON

What for?

TESS

(smiles) That's where I hide my diaphragm these days.

CUT TO:

49

KITCHEN

Jaybird bangs in through the screen door, Fritz scooting in after him. Fritz jumps onto the counter to explore and Jaybird opens the refrigerator door a crack, then wider so the light comes on. He rythmically fans the door, making the light go on and off. He turns his attention to the blender, turning it on, watching the

cont.

49

cont.

blade, dropping whatever bits of food are handy into it.

Gram enters, grabs the cat in one arm, grabs Jaybird with the other-

GRAM

I told you before not to be in here  
poking into things. You'll be tossing  
Fritz into the blender.

We FOLLOW Jaybird into the living room where Ruth has her sewing machine set up, repairing a pair of pants. Jaybird fixes on the needle bobbing, standing and staring till Ruth stops to look at him-

RUTH

What's the matter, Jaybird?

Jaybird watches the motionless needle, waiting for it to start again-

RUTH

I wish you could tell me.

Ruth moves away from the machine, hugs Jaybird. He holds himself stiffly, not responding.

RUTH

I talk about you to the Lord, you  
know. At night. I hope he's lettin  
you know what I say.

CUT TO:

50

ROADSIDE

we TRACK with a POV camera moving only three feet off the ground, down a path leading from the main road through a tangle of riverside growth. We slip past Von's TransAM and begin to hear the FLOWING WATER and the voices of Tess and Von. (Note: Some thought should be put into exactly what an ET's POV should look like- could it be infra-red, black-and white, segmented, etc. It will have to be something that doesn't confuse or disorient the audience too much)

TESS

(off) You promise?

cont.



50

cont.

VON

(off) I promise. Is it in?

TESS

(off) Just a second- there.

VON

(off) I kept thinking about this.

TESS

(off) You're all tanned. How'd you get all tanned?

No sound from them for a moment as we continue down the path-

VON

(off) That's nice.

TESS

(off) Mmmn.

VON

(off) Tess-

TESS

(off) Right there. Right there-

VON

(off) Oh I missed you-

TESS

(off) Von-

Another silence. We continue to TRACK-

TESS

(off) Von!

CUT TO:

51

RIVERSIDE

Tess and Von lie on a blanket, half-undressed. Tess stares into the woods, startled-

VON

What's the matter?

cont.

51

cont.

TESS

Something moved in the trees.

VON

You afraid of birds all of a sudden?

TESS

I'm nervous.

VON

You didn't used to be.

TESS

I haven't seen you in a long time.

VON

I know. (kisses her) Forget about the birds and the squirrels, okay?

TESS

Okay.

They begin to make love again. We slowly PAN away from them till we are looking into the trees. Something moves almost imperceptibly, leaving a branch shaking-

CUT TO:

52

KITCHEN

Ruth is setting the table and Gram is fooling with the oven when Watt enters from the back porch-

RUTH

Watt? The Rinkers just called and asked if you'd tie Kelso up tonight. Their Jenny is in heat.

WATT

Why don't I just bring him in the house?

RUTH

House is for people, not animals.

WATT

Jaybird's cat stays in the house.

cont.

52

cont.

RUTH

That's different.

Watt does an about-face and goes into the yard,  
muttering-

WATT

I don't believe this. A cat is not  
an animal but a dog is. I gotta  
get outa here.

Watt hits the yard and calls-

WATT

Kelso! Kelso!

Kelso runs around the corner and stands wagging his tail-

WATT

No nookie for you tonight, buddy.

They begin to walk toward the chicken house-

WATT

But I want you to keep your eyes  
open, hear. There's something  
fishy going on. You just watch the  
skies for me.

CUT TO:

53

INT. BAR

Tess and Von sit at stools in a beer and pinball bar,  
talking and watching as two ranch kids in John Deere  
caps, LES and JOEL, shoot pool and Jimmy Buffet sings  
from the juke box. The two conversations cross-

TESS

Anyhow, when he was little we couldn't  
keep a stitch on him. Dress him all up  
for church on Sunday, turn your back  
two seconds and he'd have everything off-

JOEL

They cut out all their sex stuff, too.

cont.

53

cont.

LES

Yeah, I heard. Corner pocket.  
Like that Jack the Ripper guy with  
women.

TESS

-and every time, Gram would say,  
'Look at im, naked as a jaybird',  
and the name stuck on.

CUT TO:

54

POOL TABLE

JOEL

My father thinks it's the Russians.

LES

Eight ball. What do the Russians  
want with cow twats?

VON

(off) Did he cry when he was a baby?

TESS

(off) Course he did. He still makes  
noises when he's excited or scared.

JOEL

It's sposed to undermine the  
democratic system.

LES

I think it's something weird to do  
with sex.

JOEL

You would.

LES

Perverts from another galaxy.

CUT TO:

55

BAR

VON

Do you ever wonder what he's  
thinking?

cont.

55

cont.

TESS

All the time. Watt had a little transistor radio once and Jaybird used to listen to it. Then it broke and he'd still put it up by his ear and sit for hours. Like he's picking up different stations than we are.

LES

(off) As long as it isn't cattle from outer space come down to mutilate our women, I don't give a shit.

VON

Must be weird in the house with him and your mother.

TESS

She's just religious.

VON

I thought you heard her talk in tongues once?

CUT TO:

56

POOL TABLE

LES

Maybe what they do is take these bits and pieces of cattle back up there and stick em in a jar and clone em. Start their own herd.

JOEL

What for?

LES

Hamburger, boy. Think they wanna travel light years every time they get the hungries for a Big Mac?

CUT TO:

57

BAR

VON

It's just such a waste, you staying out here, throwing all your talent away-

cont.

57

cont.

TESS

You don't even like classical music.

LES

(off) Rack em up, buddy! This one's for the eight-ball championship of the universe!

CUT TO:

58

KITCHEN

At the dinner table. Ed talks, Gram hovers around shuffling plates and Jaybird chews a mouthful of porkchop over and over, working his jaws like a robot-

ED

Bust your hump all year raising your stock and because some smarty pants in New York taps his calculator a certain way on the day you go to market you lose your shirt. Government's got to keep those prices stable.

WATT

I thought you wanted the government out of the agriculture business.

ED

Don't be smart. Mother, sit down, would you? It makes me nervous-

GRAM

I sit down my legs'll swell up and then I can't stand again.

ED

Well have some dinner.

GRAM

I been tasting all day. My age you don't need more than a taste.

ED

When's Tess coming home?

RUTH

She didn't say. She went in to see Von Love. He's back visiting from school.

cont.

58

cont.

ED

(watching Jaybird chew) Yeah, I  
saw him this morning. (grimaces)  
Does anybody know how to get him to  
swallow?

Watt reaches over and pinches Jaybird's nostrils shut.  
Jaybird swallows.

WATT

You want him to spit it out you  
pull on his ears.

CUT TO:

59

BLUFF, NIGHT

Tess and Von sit in the Transam on a bluff overlooking  
a valley. It is dark now, the sky full of stars, a  
few lights from ranch houses down below are visible-

VON

You been with somebody else, haven't  
you?

TESS

Why not? I didn't make any promises  
and neither did you.

VON

Who was it? Or was there more than one?

TESS

Archie Brewster.

VON

Oh God.

TESS

He's a nice boy-

VON

He's hardly human, Tess-

TESS

If you get to know him-

VON

He's got the IQ of a backhoe,  
he's all covered with hair- is  
that what you're into these days?  
King Kong?

cont.

59

cont.

TESS

I didn't go with him because  
he's hairy-

VON

Why, then?

TESS

(shrugs) You weren't here. What  
am I sposed to do, join a convent?

Von is pissed. He stares out over the valley-

VON

When did the Rinkers put lights  
in their orchard?

TESS

They didn't.

VON

(points) That's their place isn't it?

CUT TO:

60

VALLEY, VON'S POV

We see a stand of trees glowing dully on the valley  
floor-

TESS

(off) I've never seen that light  
from up here.

VON

(off) Too busy with Arlie Brewster.

TESS

(off) Arlie doesn't have a car.

CUT TO:

61

CAR

VON

That's right. He swings from branch  
to branch-

cont.



61

cont.

TESS

There's something going on down there.

VON

You want to take a look?

TESS

Maybe we ought to.

Von starts the engine-

VON

Probably it's whatever messed up those cattle has got ahold of Arlie and they're trying to figure out what species he belongs to.

TESS

Just drive the car, smartass.

CUT TO:

62

LONG SHOT, ORCHARD

looking from the valley floor. An eerie glow comes from within the stand of trees, sending little shafts of light out between the rows-

CUT TO:

63

COYOTE

standing by the roadside at the bottom of a hill, looking at the orchard, ears flattening. He scurries away as the headlights from Von's car wash over him. The car comes down the hill at us. Suddenly the lights and engine cut off. The car coasts-

CUT TO:

64

INT. CAR

Von is working the light switch to no avail.

TESS

What did you do?

VON

I didn't do anything. Look-

CUT TO:

65

ORCHARD, VON'S POV

still glowing as the car rolls to a stop-

TESS

(off) Watt had trouble with the pickup today.  
Said there was a cloud and that a light  
came out of it.

CUT TO:

66

INT. CAR

VON

Sounds like something your mother  
lifted out of the Bible. I bet it's  
the Air Force guys with their  
helicopter.

TESS

So what do we do?

VON

I'm gonna take a look.

CUT TO:

67

ORCHARD

Von and Tess climb out of the pickup.

TESS

Don't slam the door.

They warily walk toward the trees. Von takes Tess's  
hand-

TESS

(whispers) If it's a helicopter  
how come we couldn't hear it?

VON

Shhh.

The light in the orchard begins to strobe out through  
the trees as if revolving, then lifts up, up above the  
trees, then disappears.

VON

What the fuck was that?

cont.

67

cont.

TESS

The trees are lit up.

There is a phosphorescent glow coming off the trees- more intense toward the center of the orchard. We FOLLOW Von and Tess through the trees till they come to a clearing.

There is a small figure sitting on a stump at the center of the clearing, its back to them. Von and Tess trade a look, go forward. The figure is a small old man wearing denim coveralls with nothing on underneath them. His head is slumped forward, he seems asleep or dead. Tess reaches out- touches his shoulder-

MAN

No! Don't you ever!

The man leaps to his feet, face pale, eyes wild, screaming in terror-

MAN

Snakey-handed devil! You leave it be, devil! Get thee behind me, get thee behind!

TESS

Mister-

MAN

Hand of the demon! Hand of Satan!  
Don't you ever!

Von makes a move toward the wild man, who cowers, legs shaking, and curls in a protective ball on the ground-

MAN

No! Please, no! I known the angel, laid down with the angel. Angel of death. Please, no. Please-

Tess and Von stand together, not knowing what to do. There is a sudden stab of hard light in their faces, making them jump-

LOVE

What's the story here, Von?

cont.

67

cont.

It is Sheriff Love with his deputy CURTIS-

VON

Did you see the lights? We thought it was a helicopter but there wasn't any noise-

LOVE

Only lights we saw were your headlights, Von. We were over on Six Hat Road there and Curtis picked em off. Left your motor running-

TESS

It was off! The engine, radio, everything, they went dead. We were heading for the lights in the orchard-

CURTIS

Who's this?

VON

He's crazy.

LOVE

We can see that. Who is he?

TESS

I never seen him before.

Curtis runs a flashlight over the old man, who cowers, hiding his head. There are strange 'strawberry' marks on both his arms and shoulders.

MAN

Please, no. No.

CURTIS

Pretty weird looking tattoos he's got.

LOVE

He have any knives or tools or anything with him?

TESS

You think he had something to do with those cattle?

cont.

67

cont.

LOVE

Somebody did.

MAN

I known the angel! I lain down  
with the reaper! Keep them fingers  
away! Keep em away!

CURTIS

He's not gonna be a whole lot of  
help figurin this out, is he?

CUT TO:

68

INT. HOUSE

We TRACK through the ranch house. Gram is rolling  
pastry dough in the kitchen. Ruth is in the living  
room knitting while Ed glumly watches a situation comedy  
on TV. We hear Watt upstairs in his workshop,  
operating a ham radio rig. A Turkish sounding radio  
station fades in and out through the STATIC. Jaybird  
sits on the floor by Ruth, tracing the exposed printed  
circuit of a small transistor radio over and over with  
his finger-

ED

(calling) Watt? What language is  
that?

WATT

(off) Turkish, Greek, I don't know.

ED

You understand it?

CUT TO:

69

INT. WATT'S WORKSHOP

a garbage dump of electronic equipment. Watt fools with  
the dials on the ham radio-

WATT

Nope.

ED

(off) Then why do you listen to it?

WATT

I don't know. Like to see how  
far away I can get.

CUT TO:

70

## LIVING ROOM

ED  
(mutters) Right.

RUTH  
It's educational, learning about  
other cultures.

ED  
What can you learn from a lot of  
static in a foreign language?

Tess blows in, excited-

ED  
You took your time.

TESS  
We found a wild man! We saw lights  
in the sky and then there was this  
old guy talkin about the angel of  
death!

Watt comes running down the stairs-

ED  
What?

WATT  
Where?

TESS  
Rinker's orchard. Me and Von  
saw lights in the sky and we  
went down and then the engine  
conked out.

RUTH  
What's this about the angel of  
death?

TESS  
There was this old man sitting in the  
trees, and the trees were glowing, and  
when we touched him-

ED  
Where is he now?

TESS  
Sheriff Love has got him. He just went  
bananas- jumping around, saying how-

CUT TO:

71

## JAYBIRD

Unnoticed, Jaybird wanders out the door that Tess has left open in her excitement. Fritz follows him-

## TESS

(off, cont.) -we shouldn't lay our fingers on him. He's just crazy. There's these funny marks all over on his arms-

CUT TO:

72

## LIVING ROOM

Gram enters to join in the discussion-

## GRAM

We found a wild man by Dragonfly Creek when I was a little girl. All bug-eaten with this long greasy beard. Half starved to death he was, and ramblin on about bears was after him. People had bears on their mind in those days.

## TESS

This guy was into fingers. Somebody's fingers all over him.

CUT TO:

73

## FIELD

Jaybird and Fritz walk outside at the edge of a cultivated field, Jaybird pointing to each plowed row as he passes it as if counting. They walk away from us.

A spotlight appears behind him, beamed from above, and ripples over the cornrows, gaining on Jaybird and Fritz. The beam leads up to a pair of lights, one red and stable, the other white and revolving, that drift above the ground silently.

The beam holds on Jaybird and Fritz for a moment as they look up, stopping in their tracks. It accelerates away, the white light revolving even faster till it gives a last, rippling, rainbow colored flash, almost like a greeting. Jaybird begins to run in small circles, imitating the spinning lights. The lights settle down into the distant meadow and stop spinning.

cont.

73

cont.

Jaybird stops spinning, a little dizzy. The lights go off. Jaybird waits for them to reappear, then loses interest, turns and walks back the way he came, counting off each row as he passes. Fritz follows him.

CUT TO:

74

LIVING ROOM, FAMILY

TV still playing, unnoticed-

RUTH

You said there was a glow?

TESS

It was the weirdest kind of light-

ED

It's the government. I'll lay you ten to one it's the government hooked in with those agribusiness people.

TESS

Jaybird-

Jaybird rushes in with Fritz, not closing the door behind him-

ED

Where's he been?

Jaybird is wired. He hurries across the room clicking the TV selector dial around the channels, faster and faster.

RUTH

Jaybird, honey-

ED

(to Tess) You want to take care of him?

Tess herds Jaybird away from the TV-

TESS

C'mon-

cont.



74

cont.

Suddenly all the electrical apparatus in the house, lights, TV, everything- take a dip in power as if controlled by a rheostat.

WATT

Uh-oh. Gonna be a brown-out.

ED

I'll look at the fuse-box.

We hear Kelso BARKING and SNARLING outside-

RUTH

Something's happening.

ED

You go check your dog, Watt.

RUTH

Something's happening. There've been signs.

ED

Take a flashlight.

RUTH

The Lord has been warning us, but we been deaf to it-

ED

Don't you start with that business.

RUTH

But I feel it.

CUT TO:

75

YARD

We FOLLOW Watt across the yard, his flashlight beam searching ahead. We hear Kelso BARKING, GROWLING, then he cuts off. Watt calls into the dark-

WATT

Kelso! Kelso!

CUT TO:

76

## KITCHEN

Tess tries the telephone on the wall. There is no dial tone. She hangs up, turns to Gram-

TESS

Phones are out.

CUT TO:

77

## BACK PORCH

Ed fiddles with the fuse box, flashlight in hand-

CUT TO:

78

## KITCHEN

We FOLLOW Gram around the kitchen. She checks the refrigerator light, the gas burners on the stove, the blender, the electric can opener. They all work. She turns on the little microwave oven- the red light flicks on-

CUT TO:

79

## BACK PORCH

CRACK! There is a huge arc from the fuse-box, knocking Ed backwards-

ED

Damn!

CUT TO:

80

## KITCHEN

The microwave suddenly collapses in on itself, seeming to melt. Gram snatches the plug from its socket-

GRAM

Never liked the damn thing anyhow.

CUT TO:

81

## LIVING ROOM

the lights go out fully. Ruth whispers in the dark-

RUTH

Tess? Stay by me honey.

CUT TO:

82 YARD

Watt arrives at the side of the chicken house. He trains his light-

CUT TO:

83 LIGHT BEAM

It PANS along the tie-line and comes to a severed end. No Kelso-

CUT TO:

84 WATT

sends his light out across the yard-

WATT

Kelso?

There is a SOUND from the cattle pens. Watt starts for them. Another flashlight approaches-

WATT

Daddy? Kelso's gone.

ED

You tied him, didn't you?

WATT

Rope's bust. I heard something in the stock pen-

Ed steps into the beam from Watt's light. He is carrying a shotgun, looking worried. They move toward the cattle pens-

ED

I'm too tired for this kind of business.

CUT TO:

85 INT. JAYBIRD'S BEDROOM

Jaybird sits on the floor playing in the dark. He arranges marbles into geometric patterns, segregating the colors. The flap of the cat door begins to raise slowly behind him. Fritz pads over from inside the room and stands by Jaybird, watching the door-

CUT TO:

86 CAT DOOR

The flap raises halfway, stops. We can't make out what's pushing it. It drops down, swings.

CUT TO:

87 BEDROOM

Jaybird continues to play with the marbles-

CUT TO:

88 CATTLE PENS

Ed and Watt approach the holding pens, playing their lights across them-

ED

Where's that calf with the pinkeye?

Something skitters out of the way of the flashlight beam (Skar). There is a carcass lying on the ground where it was-

WATT

Daddy?

ED

I see it.

They climb in through the rails. Ed squats to examine the carcass-

CUT TO:

89 CALF CARCASS

Its eyeballs have been taken out and the flap of skin covering its skull is removed-

WATT

(off) Its eyes-

CUT TO:

90 WATT & ED

ED

Let's get back to the house.

CUT TO:

91

## LIVING ROOM

Ruth moves around the room setting up and lighting candles till the place looks like a shrine. She chants to herself-

RUTH

Bless the Lord, O my soul,  
and forget not all His benefits,  
Who forgiveth all thine iniquities,  
Who healeth all thine diseases,  
Who redeemeth thy life from  
destruction-

CUT TO:

92

## INT. JAYBIRD'S BEDROOM

Jaybird sits in the moonlight, playing with the marbles. The cat door flap pushes open, a long arm (Buddee) reaches in, long tapering fingers pluck one of the marbles from Jaybird's pile and disappear with it. Jaybird is oblivious.

The arm reaches back in and deposits a small, silver colored ring by Jaybird, then retreats out the cat door.

The ring begins to spin slowly, like a gyroscope, emitting a high-pitched BUZZ, almost beyond the human scale. It is self-propelled. Jaybird stares, fascinated.

It works its way to Jaybird's hand, then begins to crawl up his arm, revolving slowly. Jaybird watches it like it's a small animal. It balances as he stretches his arm out, spinning in a slow, hypnotic rhythm.

CUT TO:

93

## YARD

Watt and Ed walk back toward the house. They walk silently, frowning. Watt is jumpy, skipping his light over the yard. It crosses something big, standing- Ed swings his shotgun up-

WATT

Wait!

It is a cow, wandering at the edge of the yard. We hear the LOWING of several others nearby-

cont.

93

cont.

ED

What's the stock doing in here?

They move toward the cattle-

CUT TO:

94

## JAYBIRD'S BEDROOM

Tess enters with a pair of candles. The metal ring lies flat, not moving. She places the candles on the floor by Jaybird. He stares straight ahead at nothing.

TESS

Just sittin in the dark, honey?

She looks at the ring, tosses it aside-

TESS

Let me get you something to do.

She opens Jaybird's window, then brings him a couple sheets of glossy white paper and a tube of fingerpaint from his desk. She squirts a glob of paint onto one sheet.

TESS

You remember what you do with this, don't you honey? I'm gonna go make sure Momma's all right, then I'll come back and play with you.

Tess leaves. We HOLD on Jaybird as he sticks his fingers, one by one, into the paint. We PAN away from him to the open window. Long ET fingers (Buddee) appear, grasping the sill-

CUT TO:

95

## RANGE

Ed and Watt walk across the range among the standing cattle, a few yards apart.

ED

They seem kind of spooked.

Something moves ahead of Watt, there is a GALLOPING SOUND, Watt swings his light-

cont.

95

cont.

A cow flashes by, running full-tilt, a small creature (Squirt) clinging to its back like a jockey. It is in and out of the light in an instant.

ED

What was that?

WATT

It was too quick-

There is a high, CHATTERING CALL off to one side of them. Ed whirls- a pair of eyes gleam out at them (Skar).

WHAM!

Ed blasts at the eyes. By the time Watt has his light trained the thing is gone.

WATT

You missed it.

ED

I couldn't see it. (breaks open his gun) Must have been a coyote.

WATT

The cattle didn't even twitch when you blew that off. It's like they're drugged.

ED

Let's get home.

CUT TO:

96

## LIVING ROOM

Tess is securing window and door locks in the living room. Ruth stares out a window-

RUTH

That was your father's shotgun-

TESS

Proibly saw a coyote.

GRAM

Then what are you lockin the house up for?

cont.

96

cont.

Ruth turns to speak to Tess-

RUTH

You can't keep it out, you know.  
If the time has come- well,  
we just have to accept it.

She turns back to look out the window again just as  
an ET, KLUD, looks in from outside-

Ruth SCREAMS as Klud zips out of sight, just as scared-

TESS

What's the matter?

RUTH

They're here! They're here!

GRAM

Who's here?

RUTH

The messengers! The messengers  
have come!

TESS

Calm down, Momma-

GRAM

Who's here?

RUTH

The time has come!

GRAM

Awful lot of fuss for a little  
power blackout.

CUT TO:

97

JAYBIRD'S BEDROOM

We watch Jaybird's hand, fingerpainting strange, complex  
designs that look like printed circuits on the paper.  
We FOLLOW his hand up to his face as he looks at his  
blue-painted fingers, then FOLLOW it to the face of  
an ET, BUDDIE, who sits calmly across from Jaybird in  
the candlelight. Jaybird touches Buddie's face,  
leaving blue streaks. Buddie dips his fingers in the  
paint, then starts drawing on another sheet-

CUT TO:



98

## LIVING ROOM

Watt and Ed burst in through the front door-

TESS

Momma saw something at the window!

ED

What?

RUTH

A demon! It was a devil!

WATT

We shot at one!

Fritz runs squalling through the room, totally freaked. The lights and TV suddenly glow on for a moment, then cut off again-

TESS

(sees) The candles-

CUT TO:

99

## CANDLES

We PAN around the room as one by one the candles sputter and snuff out-

CUT TO:

100

## LIVING ROOM

the family stands in the moonlit room. Something begins to SCRATCH the wall outside-

CUT TO:

101

## FACES

We PAN from face to face as the family listens-

GRAM

What's happening? Something's happening.

ED

Shhhh.

Ruth begins to whisper a prayer-

cont.

101 cont.

(points) WATT  
The window!

CUT TO:

102 WINDOW

Klud is peering in again-

CUT TO:

103 ED

swings his gun up- BLAM!

CUT TO:

104 WINDOW

Shattering, the face gone. Watt and Ed rush up to look outside-

GRAM  
I didn't see-

RUTH  
Look out for the glass-

GRAM  
What's going on? What's happening?

TESS  
What was it?

We hear Kelso BARKING, seemingly just outside.  
There is a SCRATCHING at the front door-

WATT  
Kelso!

He moves to open the front door-

ED  
Leave it be, Watt-

WATT  
He's out there-

He opens the door- an ET, HOODOO, stands there.  
Watt gasps and jumps back-

cont.

104

cont.

WHAM!

Ed blasts through the doorway, the ET ducking away just in time. Ed runs forward, kicks the door shut and locks it-

ED

Get Jaybird in here-

GRAM

I didn't see-

TESS

What are they?

ED

The ones who did the cattle. They come for us. Get the boy.

RUTH

Forgive us, Lord, we're just poor sinners-

CUT TO:

105

JAYBIRD'S ROOM

We FOLLOW Tess into the room- Buddie sits with Jaybird on the floor like a friend come to play after school. He looks over his shoulder at Tess when she-

SCREAMS

-then darts over and hops out the open window. Tess rushes to slam the window and lock it as Watt runs in-

WATT

What's the matter?

TESS

There was one here, it went out the window! C'mon, Jaybird-

Tess and Watt hustle him out of the room, knocking the checkerboard over in their hurry-

WATT

We got to stay together.

cont.

105

cont.

We HOLD on the room, then PAN across the spilled checkers to the sheet of paper Buddie was drawing on. It is marked in blue with a complicated celestial map, full of planets and stars and orbit-circles-

CUT TO:

106

## LIVING ROOM

The family is clustered together in the dark; Ruth on her knees praying silently, Ed covering the front door with his gun. Tess holds onto Jaybird who squirms to free himself, and Gram looks at all of them like they're crazy-

WATT

They're space people. They really are. Aren't they?

ED

It didn't look like it had a weapon.

TESS

What are we going to do?

A brilliant blue light begins to strobe through the windows, playing on the faces. A loud, mechanical voice calls from outside-

VOICE

Ed Bishop! Are you there?

ED

They know my name.

VOICE

Ed Bishop! Come on out!

Ed moves toward the door-

TESS

Don't, Daddy-

VOICE

Ed Bishop!

Ed unlocks the door, takes a deep breath-

cont.

106 cont.

ED

We have to see what they want.  
Get back against the wall and  
stay low.

The family moves back and Ed throws the door open,  
steps onto the porch-

CUT TO:

107 FRONT YARD

Sheriff Love stands by his blue-strobing patrol car,  
loudspeaker voice box in hand. Next to him Curtis levels  
a rifle at Ed-

LOVE

(to Curtis) Easy-

Love calls without the speaker-

LOVE

Ed? What's the matter? Put  
down the gun-

ED

Are they still here?

LOVE

Put down the gun.

Ed lowers the shotgun, Curtis lowers his rifle. Von  
comes out from behind the car-

LOVE

We heard a shot.

ED

Did you see them?

One by one the family peek out and come to stand by  
Ed, blinking in the light from the patrol car-

LOVE

Something wrong with your power?

They spill off the porch toward Love, talking all  
at once-

cont.

107

Cont.

WATT

Humanoids! They're about three feet high with eyes like grasshoppers and these arms-

RUTH

It's come, Greg, it's time. We all got to get ourselves right-

Von steps out from the patrol car-

VON

Tess?

TESS

Von, it's awful! There was one in with Jaybird-

GRAM

I didn't see nothin-

ED

They come through the windows, through the door- out monkeyin with the livestock-

CURTIS

Humanoids?

TESS

(points) What's he doing here?

We see that the man from the orchard is sitting in the rear of the patrol car, staring in a trance-

VON

We're taking him to the airstrip. Those fellas that were at Turley's are picking him up-

TESS

The marks on his arms are gone-

Suddenly the house lights flick on. We hear the TV playing-

LOVE

This is getting weird. We better take a look around.

CUT TO:

108

EXT. HOUSE

Ed and Sheriff Love walk around the outside of the house together, flashing lights at the pellet blasted window. Love watches Ed's face as he talks uneasily-

LOVE

You only got a peek at em?

ED

Enough to know it's nothing I ever seen before.

Love shines his light over the shattered glass-

LOVE

No blood. I thought you hit it?

ED

Hit three different ones unless there's only one that's been moving around. Couldn't have missed them.

LOVE

How's Ruth holding up?

ED

You saw her. She thinks it's the Hour of Judgement.

LOVE

You know, sometimes when somebody really gets going with that stuff, testifying to the spirit and all, it can get everybody else worked up too-

ED

(pissed) I'm not 'worked up'! My home is crawling with little freak-show bastards and I'm trying to protect it.

LOVE

It was just a thought.

ED

Let's look at the chicken house.

Ed strides away, still mad. Love looks after him, puzzled-

CUT TO:

109

## KITCHEN

Tess sits at the kitchen table drawing her version of what Buddee looked like. She draws well. The others crowd around her, Von and Curtis to look and Ruth and Watt to give guidance. Gram sits watching the orchard man, plunked in a chair across from Tess, staring blankly-

WATT

Their eyes were like the size of an orange. No, maybe a grapefruit. But not all bulgey-

RUTH

They glowed red when they looked at you-

WATT

They didn't seem to focus on anything-

RUTH

There was a kind of glow around them-

GRAM

I didn't see none of that.

CUT TO:

110

## PICTURE

a portrait of Buddee taking shape, fairly accurate-

WATT

(off) It was like they were coated- polyurethaned or something- so the moonlight shines off em-

GRAM

(off) All I seen was people runnin round blastin holes in the winders.

CURTIS

(off) How do you spell 'polyurethane'?

CUT TO:



111

KITCHEN

VON

You really saw this thing, Tess?

TESS

(defensive) Big as life.

CURTIS

Ugly little sucker.

VON

There must be some kind of explanation.

WATT

Its arms were longer than that, the one I saw-

TESS

Explanation? What does that mean?

GRAM

(to orchard man) And what's your story?

The man turns his head to stare at her eerily-

CUT TO:

112

## LIVING ROOM

Jaybird sits spinning the ring on top of a coffee table. It spins like any other ring would, its life gone for the moment. The TV is on, playing the 'Tonight Show'. Jaybird watches the ring spin to a stop. He spins it again-

CUT TO:

113

## INT. CHICKEN HOUSE

Ed and Love kneel examining a dead chicken-

LOVE

Not a mark on it.

ED

No reason for it to be dead.

LOVE

Might have swallowed a nail-  
cont.

113

cont.

Love pulls out a jackknife-

LOVE

You mind?

ED

Go ahead.

Love cuts into the bird's crop and breast, holding it away from his body. He spreads it open-

LOVE

That is weird. That is really weird.

ED

No blood. Not a drop.

Ed and Love exchange a look, a bit freaked.

CUT TO:

114

KITCHEN

Tess is finishing her drawing-

WATT

I still think the arms are longer-

GRAM

She draws nice, don't she?  
Always had a good hand.

RUTH

It's the eyes. The eyes were huge.

Tess lifts the drawing and puts it in front of the orchard man's face. His eyes bulge, he SCREAMS and bolts from his chair. Curtis grabs for him-

CURTIS

Here he goes again-

MAN

Angel of death! Angel of death!

CUT TO:

115

YARD

the men get into the patrol car to go as the family looks on. Love has Tess's drawing. Curtis has the orchard man in handcuffs, calmed now-

LOVE

We'll show this to those Air Force people. You all just try to get some sleep. Anything that was here is good and gone now..

TESS

What if they come back?

LOVE

Your phone line's clear now. Give us a call.

ED

Greg- uhm- I'd appreciate it if you didn't spread this around- you know-

WATT

But it happened!

ED

Don't want people getting the wrong idea about us.

LOVE

(understands) I'll try to keep a lid on it.

ED

Thank you.

They drive off, Von giving Tess a last, worried look. The family watches the car disappear, stomachs sinking. They look at the house with trepidation-

WATT

Still don't know where Kelso got to.

ED

He must of broke loose to pester after Mrs. Rinker's bitch. (sighs)  
Gettin cold.

He starts back to the house. The others follow-

CUT TO:

116

## JAYBIRD'S BEDROOM

Tess tucks Jaybird into bed. He lies stiffly, arms straight down at his sides, staring up at the ceiling. Tess kisses him.

TESS

Goodnight, honey. You dream good stuff, now.

She starts to leave, pausing to frown at the checkerboard, which is set up with the pieces back in their squares. She shakes her head, dismisses it, then picks up the fingerpainted pictures and lays them on Jaybird's desk without looking at them. She exits.

CUT TO:

117

## LIVING ROOM

Johnny Carson on the TV, Ed pacing the room. Ruth sits in her nightgown-

ED

We got to get together on our story.

TESS

(enters) What story?

ED

What we tell people when they ask what went on tonight. We go blabbin what we think we saw they'll think we're all soft in the head.

TESS

I know Von doesn't believe it happened.

GRAM

(exits to kitchen) All I seen is crazy people. They ask me and that's what I'll tell em.

ED

Watt?

WATT

Yeah. Sure. I'll keep my mouth shut.

cont.

117

cont.

ED

And Ruthie, honey, you member that time you saw the Virgin Mary up over that smokestack when we were driving into Butte? Well we're gonna have to keep this to ourselves, just like we did then.

RUTH

It's like I dreamed it all.

ED

That's right. Now I'm going out to check on the horses. Watt, I want you to make sure the chickens are okay-

WATT

You just looked in there. It's all locked up.

ED

Get a move on.

Ruth watches nervously as Ed and Watt leave-

ED

I won't be long, honey.

RUTH

Are you gonna stay up?

TESS

I thought I'd take a bath.

RUTH

Is Jaybird tucked in?

TESS

Uh-huh.

RUTH

I'm scared.

Tess gives her a kiss on the cheek-

TESS

I'll come down after my bath and keep you company.

cont.

117 cont.

Ruth is left alone in the room. She crosses to the TV, switches channels till she comes to a slick, silver haired evangelist. She sits, body held tight, and gives her mind to the program-

CUT TO:

118 KITCHEN

Gram is Saran-wrapping leftovers from dinner, muttering to herself-

GRAM

Seeing spirits- shootin winders  
out- regular bughouse around here.  
Bad blood is what it is- bad blood.

CUT TO:

119 INT. UPSTAIRS BATHROOM

Tess runs water into the tub. She tests it with her hand. She begins to undress, pauses, locks the door and window, then starts taking clothes off again-

CUT TO:

120 EXT. STABLE

Ed lifts the latch on the stable door, holding his flashlight and shotgun in the same hand-

CUT TO:

121 INT. CHICKEN HOUSE

Watt makes a move to look in one of the coops, then shies away. Too spooky. He walks to his spot by the piano, digs underneath the feed sacks, and pulls out a copy of Eustler. He settles down to read-

CUT TO:

122

## LIVING ROOM

Ruth sits watching the evangelist. The TV begins to roll, the audio fuzzing out completely. Ruth goes to fool with the controls. We see that behind her back the ring, which has been lying innocuously on the coffee table, is coming to life in a slow spin-

CUT TO:

123

## CLOSER, RUTH

she kneels to mess with the TV controls. An ET hand, (Hoodoo) appears next to her, palm pressing flat on the screen. Ruth freezes, scared to utter a sound. The TV picture rights itself but the sound doesn't come back-

CUT TO:

124

## KITCHEN

Gram finishes with the Saran Wrap, takes it to the pantry, opens the door-

GRAM

Aaaaak!

SQUIRT, the small, red-tinged ET we saw on the cow's back, stands there with sticks of uncooked spaghetti needling out of his mouth. Gram drops the cellophane, and Squirt opens his mouth to chatter, sending the spaghetti flying across the floor-

GRAM

Out! Get out! Shoo!

She hurries to the broom closet, grabs a broom and swings it at Squirt, who grabs hold of the straws, hugging to them and enjoying the ride as she swings it around trying to shake him-

GRAM

Off! Get off of there! Shoo!

CUT TO:

125

## LIVING ROOM

Ruth sits staring at Hoodoo, who sits on the coffee table staring back at her. The ring spins hypnotically next to him. Ruth speaks distantly-

cont.

125 cont.

RUTH  
Yes....yes.....yes....

CUT TO:

126 BATHROOM

Tess sits in the tub, soaping herself, humming.  
Something across the room catches her eye-

CUT TO:

127 WALL, TESS'S POV

We PAN across the wall following a series of strange  
blue finger marks, marks that lead to the clothes  
hamper, also marked with blue finger-paint-

CUT TO:

128 TESS  
reacting-

CUT TO:

129 HAMPER

The lid starts to rise, eyes (Buddee) gleam out-

CUT TO:

130 TESS  
she gasps-

CUT TO:

131 INT. STABLE

very quiet as Ed shines his light around. Only one  
horse is standing up in the stall. Ed steps into the  
stall, shines his light on the floor-

CUT TO:



132 STALL FLOOR, ED'S POV

SKAR stands on the side of the carcass of a horse. The horse's viscera are exposed. Skar's claws are extended like a tiger's, tinged with blood. He looks up at Ed calmly-

CUT TO:

133 STABLE

Ed holds the light on Skar-

ED

You sonofabitch-

The nails on Skar's hands extend even further-

ED

I plop your hide on their desk  
they'll believe me-

Ed levels his shotgun. Skar swivels his head to look into the eyes of the standing horse-

CUT TO:

134 ECU, SKAR'S EYES

the pupils dilate till his eyes are totally black-

CUT TO:

135 ECU, HORSE'S EYES

wide, in panic all of a sudden, the horse SHRIEKS-

CUT TO:

136 STABLE

the horse rears, kicks- WHAP! Ed is sent crashing against the stall with a hoof to the cheek. He collapses to the ground-

CUT TO:

137 HORSE

the horse immediately stops kicking and stands still, numbed out-

CUT TO:

138 CU, ED

his face in the hay, one cheek badly smashed. Skar's hand appears, peels Ed's eyelid up to see if he's conscious, then disappears.

CUT TO:

139 KITCHEN

Gram is battling Squirt, poking at him with her broom with little effect. Squirt takes a handful of pie from the table, puts it in his mouth. Gram swats him-

GRAM  
Get out of that! Scoot!

Squirt spits out the pie, making a disgusted face.

GRAM  
Get out! Out!

Squirt turns on a burner of the gas stove and begins to throw everything he can find- scraps of dinner, salt shakers, pot holders- onto the flame. Gram swats him off the counter-

GRAM  
Get off there! Stop that!

Her broom catches fire and she tries to beat it out. Squirt opens the refrigerator and begins pulling things out to examine them-

CUT TO:

140 INT. CHICKEN HOUSE

Watt is sleepily reading Hustler. A chicken appears beside him and begins to peck at a few loose grains on the feed sacks.

WATT  
Where'd you come from?

Watt looks around. We PULL BACK to see a dozen chickens loose on the floor, spreading out-

cont.

140

cont.

WATT

Hey you guys, what's the story?

A glop of chickenshit splats on his magazine. He looks up. A chicken flutters from one rafter to another-

WATT

What are you doing up there?

Watt grabs a low beam, gets a toehold, and begins to climb toward the chicken on the rafter. As he gets close Klud pops out from behind a rafter-

WATT

Jesus!

Watt scrambles down to the floor and Klud leaps- and floats down gently next to him-

WATT

Stay away! Stay away from me!

Klud cocks his head to glance at the picture left showing in the magazine, then grabs hold of the transistor radio. At the touch of his hand it BLARES to life. It moves up and down the band, snatches from dozens of stations rippling in and out. He drops the radio and grabs a chicken, trying to make it look him in the eye-

WATT

You get outa here! This is our barn! Those are our chickens!

CUT TO:

141

## JAYBIRD'S ROOM

Jaybird is out of bed sitting on the floor in the dark spinning a frisbee over and over. We PAN slowly to the locked window. An ET hand (Skar) appears outside, palm pressed against the pane, fingers spread. It begins to glow red, and the glass begins to melt, dripping down the sill like wax. The hand reaches through the melted hole and turns the latch-

CUT TO:

142

## BATHROOM

Tess sits in the tub, terrified, trying to cover herself as Buddee watches her intently from across the room. The blue paint still marks his face and hands.

TESS

What do you want?

Buddee climbs sideways along the wall till he stands straddling the open toilet bowl, never taking his eyes off Tess-

TESS

Why can't you leave us alone?

Buddee starts to climb the back of the tank for a better view, using the flush-handle for a foothold-  
FLUSH! Buddee flushes the toilet, looks down in surprise-

CUT TO:

143

## TOILET BOWL, BUDDEE'S POV

water swirling down the pipe-

CUT TO:

144

## ROOM

Buddee is horrified, he SCREECHES and leaps- SPLASH! into the tub with Tess, who SHRIEKS and scrambles out and out the door-

CUT TO:

145

## JAYBIRD'S ROOM

Skar stands facing Jaybird, looking deep into his eyes. Jaybird is curious. He licks his fingers, then reaches out to touch Skar's face as he did with Buddee. Skar freaks- SCREECHING and contorting his face into an elaborate threat display, then begins to run in rapid circles, SCREECHING. Jaybird watches, then begins to run in little circles also, making a car ENGINE SOUND.

CUT TO:

146

## TESS

bursts into the room, sees, GASPS-

CUT TO:

147 ROOM

Skar and Jaybird run in intersecting circles, barely missing each other. Tess grabs Jaybird and drags him into her bedroom, slamming the door between them and Skar. Skar stops running, flashes one last display in their direction-

CUT TO:

148 KITCHEN

Gram still fighting Squirt, trying to keep him from playing with the roast chicken remains on the floor. He hops on the table, pokes her face, exploring- she swings at him and he ducks. He pokes again as she moves and her false teeth come flying out and clatter on the table. Squirt SCREECHES in horror, leaps off the table. Gram stuffs her teeth back in, takes a grip on the broom-

GRAM

That does it-

She swats Squirt, sending him tumbling backwards-

GRAM

I mean business now!

CUT TO:

149 EXT. CHICKEN HOUSE

Watt comes sprinting out of the chicken house in the dark, a few freaked out chickens flapping after him. He runs across the yard till he skids to a stop, almost colliding with Ed, who half-kneels on the ground holding his hands to his face, the shotgun at his feet.

WATT

Daddy? You okay?

ED

Horse kicked me.

WATT

There's one in the chicken house-

They raise their heads to listen as a loud CLACKING call fills the air-

CUT TO:

150 EXT. FRONT YARD

Skar stands facing the house, CLACKING a rallying call with his throat-

CUT TO:

151 LIVING ROOM

Ruth kneels before Hoodoo, head bowed, praying-

RUTH

-in sin we are conceived and in  
sin so shall we live. Oh Lord,  
forgive us the wayward path of our  
mean lives, and grant us-

Hoodoo cocks his head at the CLACKING from outside, gives Ruth a last look and pads quietly out the front door, leaving it open. Ruth has her eyes clamped shut and continues to pray, the rolling TV picture her only audience-

RUTH

-the grace to fulfill thy Holy  
Design.

CUT TO:

152 KITCHEN

Squirt heeds the call, scooting out of the kitchen. Gram throws the broom after him-

GRAM

Don't you come back, you hear?

She looks around at the shambles of her kitchen-

GRAM

Oh Lord.

She sinks to the floor, her back against the refrigerator-

GRAM

They run me ragged.

CUT TO:

153

FRONT YARD

Skar CLACKING, Hoodoo standing next to him now-

CUT TO:

154

INT. CHICKEN HOUSE

Feathers floating in the air, chickens running loose all over. Klud drops the chicken he's trying to communicate with and scoots out into the yard-

CUT TO:

155

FRONT YARD

Skar CLACKING, flanked by Hoodoo and Squirt-

CUT TO:

156

TESS'S BEDROOM

Tess sits on the bed holding Jaybird, listening to the CLACKING. It stops abruptly. We FOLLOW as Tess goes into the front hall, dragging Jaybird by the arm. She moves to close the front door-

CUT TO:

157

TOP OF THE STAIRS

we look over Buddie's shoulder as he sits at the top of the stairs watching Tess close and lock the door-

CUT TO:

158

LIVING ROOM

Tess continues with Jaybird into the living room. Ruth sits on the couch, dazed, as if she's just come out of a dream-

RUTH

What happened?

GRAM

(off) Edward! Edward!

CUT TO:

159

KITCHEN-----

Tess, Jaybird and Ruth rush in to find Gram slumped against the refrigerator, heart thumping, hysterical-

GRAM

Got to put the traps out!  
 Tell Edward to put the traps  
 out! They're runnin loose in  
 the pantry!

Ruth helps Gram to her feet-

GRAM

They're into the food and everything-

There is a ~~BANG~~ at the screen door. They all jump-

WATT

(off) Somebody?! Let us in!

Tess unlocks the door and Watt helps Ed in and sits him at a chair-

RUTH

Ed! Your face!

ED

Get Sheriff Love on the phone.

WATT

They're into the chicken house-

GRAM

They been in my pantry, Edward.  
 You got to put the traps out.

TESS

(trying phone) Phone's out  
 again.

RUTH

Let me get something for that-

ED

No, you stay right here. We got  
 to figure a plan.

CUT TO:

160

EXT. YARD

Klud, Hoodoo and Squirt ring around Skar, staring into his eyes, all black pupil, as they hold a telepathetic strategy session-

CUT TO:



161

## KITCHEN

The family barricade themselves into the kitchen, all pitching in. They push a dishwasher against the door to the outside, pile a table and chairs across the passageway to the living room. Watt nails scraps of apple crate across the back windows-

RUTH

He said to me- he didn't talk- you know- but his thoughts spoke to mine- he said we were being warned that things were out of hand and something awful would happen if we didn't act better.

ED

Don't be talking that stuff, Ruth.

RUTH

Well he did. He sat there and he spoke straight to my mind.

ED

Watt, you wanna give me a hand with this dishwasher?

TESS

What if they don't go away when it's daylight? Or if they break in?

ED

Nothing's gonna break in through all this. Watt-

Watt stops hammering. The family perks as we hear furniture being moved on the other side of the table barricade, SCRAPING the floor.

GRAM

What's that?

WATT

It's them.

The table rattles as something is jammed up against it-

TESS

They're blocking us in. They want us here.

Ed grabs his shotgun-

cont.

161 cont.

**ED**

We got to stay calm and stay together.  
We got to be ready when they try to  
come in.

CUT TO:

162 TOP OF STAIRS

Buddee watches as Klud and Hoodoo pass by the foot of the stairs dragging a big trunk from Tess's room, not seeing him. Buddee stands and we FOLLOW him into Watt's workshop. He hops up next to the short wave rig and turns it so its inner workings are accessible. He cocks his head, studying it for a moment, then begins to rewire it-

CUT TO:

163 CU, BUDDIE'S HANDS

his fingers move at three times normal speed, incredibly dextrous as he rewires the set-

CUT TO:

164 BUDDIE

he finishes, stands back, then adjusts a dial. A red light on the machine begins to flash on and off in a rhythmic pattern, as if a signal is being sent somewhere-

CUT TO:

165 KITCHEN

The family sits at the center of the kitchen floor, backs to each other, tense. Ed has his gun, Watt holds a huge chopping knife. The faucet DRIPS slowly. Tess holds Jaybird, who is alert, listening to the air. We do a CIRCULAR PAN around them, looking at each face. The lights go out.

**ED**

Just keep hold of each other.

From outside we hear dissonant PIANO NOISES-

cont.

165

cont.

WATT

Chickens are up on your piano.

TESS

They aren't heavy enough to make it play.

ED

Shhhh. We got to listen.

The PIANO NOISE stops. The family sits in the dark, listening. RRRRAWWWR! The electric blender suddenly pops on at full speed. Ruth rushes over and unplugs it. She stands, listening, looking around. She finds a candle and a match, lights it-

RUTH

Is that water on the floor?

CUT TO:

166

FLOOR

Ruth's POV. A puddle is spreading across the floor. We PAN to follow it to its source, the base of the refrigerator.

TESS

(off) It's the refrigerator.

CUT TO:

167

KITCHEN

Ruth moves toward the refrigerator with her candle-

WATT

It's defrosting.

RUTH

Not this fast-

She opens the door- the light doesn't come on but a puddle of water sloshes out over her feet-

RUTH

Oh!

ED

Leave it, Ruth.

cont.

167

cont.

Ruth opens the face-level freezer compartment- RROWL!  
Fritz leaps out, squalling. Ruth SCREAMS as he  
whizzes past her face, lands and runs into the pantry.  
Ed gets up and gently pulls Ruth back with the family.

ED

Just sit right here. We sit here  
till daylight, okay?

WATT

(pointing) Daddy-

CUT TO:

168

WINDOW, WATT'S POV

An intense, white light is coming through the cracks  
between the boards on the windows. There is the  
sound of glass being SMASHED-

CUT TO:

169

KITCHEN

Ed swivels to cover the windows with his gun. There is  
more GLASS BREAKING, then the boards start to CREAK  
as they are pushed in from outside. POP! One is  
knocked out of place and a full shaft of the blinding  
light blasts in. The family covers their eyes.

GRAM

What's out there?

TESS

I can't see!

POP! CRACK! POP! The boards go CLATTERING to the  
floor. Jaybird struggles to free himself from Tess-

TESS

No, Jaybird. Stay with me.  
Don't be scared.

Just when the light is almost unbearable through the  
knocked-in windows, it cuts off completely. Ruth's  
candle provides the only light.

cont.

169

cont.

WATT

They're playing with us! Just playing.

TESS

Jaybird! Don't fight me!

A laser-like beam shoots in through one window, then another joins it from another window. A pair of tentacle like tubes appear, sending the beams ahead of them, snaking in through the windows. The tubes are translucent, light flowing through them like water through a hose. They reach in further, further, probing-

WHAM!

Ed blasts at one with his gun. It reels, then lashes out and smacks the gun from his hands. A third arm snakes through the window, this one with a metal tip on it. It heads straight for Ed- ZAP! It gives him a shock as he tries to block it away. ZAP! ZAP! ZAP! The third arm prods the family back against the far wall at the same time as it shocks Tess and Jaybird away from them-

TESS

Daddy!

CRACK! The prod gives Tess a huge, spark-showering shock that makes her let go of Jaybird-

WEOOOM! The back door erupts inward, dishwasher tumbling, as if kicked in by a giant foot. A gap is opened to the back yard- Jaybird runs to it and wriggles through-

TESS

Jaybird!

The tentacles zip back out. Tess runs to the gap at the back door and Watt rushes to look out the window-

TESS

Jaybird! Jaybird!

CUT TO:

170

EXT. YARD, TESS'S POV

We see Jaybird running away into the night, flanked by Hoodoo and Klud. A light from the sky trails behind them-

CUT TO:

171

## KITCHEN

The lights come back on as Tess turns to face her family, tears in her eyes-

TESS

He ran off with them.

WATT

(awed) I saw lights in the sky.

CUT TO:

172

## INT. WATT'S WORKSHOP

We start on the transmitter light, still blinking its message in red, then PAN across the room to an open window, the curtains flapping in and out, marked with blue fingerprints-

CUT TO:

173

## INT. PICKUP, YARD

Watt turns the ignition key- nothing. He tries the radio- no dice.

WATT

Damn.

CUT TO:

174

## EXT. YARD

Watt gets out of the pickup and crosses to where Ed is leading the remaining horse from the stable, saddled and ready to ride.

WATT

I think the battery's dead.

ED

You member what I told you about riding at night?

WATT

Stay on flat ground and keep to a canter.

cont.

174

cont.

ED

First place you find where you can make a call you get the fire department, tell them the house is burning. Understand?

WATT

What about Jaybird?

ED

Don't you worry, we'll get him back.

Watt climbs into the saddle-

ED

You be careful, he's real spooked.

WATT

C'moan, git!

Watt gallops out of the yard-

CUT TO:

175

KNOLL

Skar, Hoodoo, Klud and Squirt ring around Jaybird on a moonlit knoll. The scene has a feeling of ritual to it. Jaybird sits, then lies on his back, spreading his arms out wide.

Hoodoo steps forward, his middle finger extended. The long, sharp fingernail eases out. He takes his finger and traces a perfectly round circle on Jaybird's forehead. He draws a slightly larger one on Jaybird's chest, slightly to the left, over the heart-

CUT TO:

176

RANGE

Ed walks the empty range armed only with a flashlight, searching, calling-

ED

Jaybird! Jaybiird!

CUT TO:

177

## YARD

The yard is full of loose and wandering animals- a few cows, dozens of milling chickens. Ruth and Gram help Tess push her piano out into the yard on its casters, straining to get it over the bumpy earth-

GRAM

I always thought you were the one  
had the common sense around here-

TESS

Push, Gram. Help Momma push.

GRAM

Shut up and keep pushing. That's  
the way they treat you. In my day-

TESS

Push!

CUT TO:

178

## KNOLL

Skar steps forward and presses his palm to Jaybird's forehead-

WHAP!

Buddee appears and knocks Skar's hand away. SNAP! Buddee backs Skar away with a viscious snap of his jaws. Skar and Buddee square off and begin to fight, the others following the action, ranged around them. At first the two rush at each other with threat displays- puffing, hissing, snapping- then both extend their claws and begin to slash at each other. The fight takes them all down the side of the knoll a ways, leaving Jaybird lying alone on his back. We begin to hear PIANO MUSIC in the far distance, but the ET's are too involved in the dominance struggle to notice-

CUT TO:

179

## JAYBIRD

sits up, listening hard for the music-

CUT TO:



180 YARD

Tess plays a stormy passage in the center of the yard, tromping the pedal, banging the keys as hard as she can-

CUT TO:

181 JAYBIRD

Stands and begins to wander towards the music-

CUT TO:

182 KNOLL, ET'S

Buddee retreats down the hill as the bigger, stronger Skar attacks, slashing. Black blood glistens from the cuts on Buddee's face-

CUT TO:

183 YARD

Tess plays as hard and loud as she can. Gram and Ruth shine flashlights out into the darkness-

CUT TO:

184 KNOLL, ET'S

The others have joined in against Buddee now, chasing him as he runs away, snapping and CALLING after him threateningly. They stop and Buddee keeps running till he is out of sight. Skar cocks his head, hearing the music for the first time. He CLACKS and the ET's scramble back up the hill-

CUT TO:

185 RANGE

Ed walks through a group of drowsy cattle, shining his light among them, calling-

ED

Jaybird! Jaybird!

He sees something, levels his flashlight-

CUT TO:

186 ED'S POV

Jaybird wanders down the side of a hill into the light-

CUT TO:

187 RANGE

Ed runs to Jaybird, tries to pull him along faster-

ED

Jaybird!

CUT TO:

188 MAIN ROAD

We TRACK alongside Watt as he gallops the horse down an unlighted paved road. He lifts his head to look ahead-

CUT TO:

189 ROAD, WATT'S POV

a light appears far ahead on the road, coming toward him-

CUT TO:

190 WATT

swats his horse for more speed-

WATT

G'moan now, hyaa!

CUT TO:

191 ROAD, WATT'S POV

the light grows larger as it approaches till it lifts and separates from the road into the sky-

CUT TO:

192 CU, WATT

surprised as he realizes what's happening-

CUT TO:

193

ROAD

Watt pulls in the reins, gets the horse stopped and turned around, the light gaining on them, then gallops back in the opposite direction, out of the frame. We HOLD for a moment till a beam of light cast down from the sky passes, in casual pursuit-

CUT TO:

194

YARD

Tess still playing-

ED

(off) Tess! I've got him!

RUTH

It's your father!

Tess stops playing-

TESS

Daddy?

Ed appears out of the dark with Jaybird in tow. Ruth and Tess rush to them. Jaybird strains to pull Tess to the piano-

ED

Found him wandering around with the stock.

TESS

(examining) What's this mark?

CUT TO:

195

CU JAYBIRD

There is a raised welt on Jaybird's forehead where Hoodoo traced the circle-

ED

(off) I don't know if they're gone or what.

CUT TO:

196

YARD

ED

Ruthie, you want to give the  
pickup another try?

They are interrupted as Watt gallops into the yard-

WATT

They're coming! They're coming!

Watt dismounts and runs to them-

WATT

They're up in the sky!

RUTH

(points) Oh my Lord-

CUT TO:

197

SKY

a space ship is cruising toward the yard, fifty feet  
above the ground, a spotlight spreading before it on  
the ground, lighting up the wandering livestock-

CUT TO:

198

CU ED

looking form the sky toward the cattle pens-

CUT TO:

199

PENS, ED'S POV

we see two shadowy figures (Klud & Hoodoo) skitter  
from post to post, advancing on the family-

CUT TO:

200

YARD

Ed moves to take hold of Gram-

ED

Everybody into the tractor shed!  
Come on!

cont.

200 cont.

He pulls Gram and the others move with him-

GRAM  
What's happening? What is  
that thing?

The family manages to outrun the edge of the spotlight  
to the equipment shed-

CUT TO:

201 INT. SHED

Ed slams the door and latches it. Light comes through  
the board chinks as the ship hovers outside-

CUT TO:

202 LONG SHOT, YARD

the ship lowers to about twenty feet, hovering over the  
shed and washing it with light. The tiny figures of  
the ET's on the ground scurry into the open, heading for  
the barn-

CUT TO:

203 INT. SHED

Watt has lighted a match and is poking around the rear  
of the shed-

WATT  
There's some of them bug-candles  
back here, somewhere.

CUT TO:

204 INT. SHED, FAMILY

Ed and Tess drag a huge tractor tire and wedge it against  
the shed door. Ruth has lost it again-

RUTH  
This is the end of it all.  
This is the Judgement.

cont.

204

cont.

TESS

Please don't, Momma, it doesn't help.

Watt comes from the back with a lit bug-candle-

WATT

Got some light.

GRAM

They gonna take us off to outer space?

WATT

The Dog Star, Gram. It's-

He is interrupted by the sound of the piano being SMASHED. They stand in silence for a moment as the last chord echoes-

TESS

What'd they have to do that for?

There is a SCUTTling from above-

ED

They're on the roof.

RUTH

I'm sorry, Lord. I'm sorry-

Suddenly the lights of the huge cultivator behind them snap on and the engine ROARS to life. It pops into reverse, nearly crushing Watt and Ed as it climbs over the spare tire and starts to push the shed door out. Watt leaps on it, grabs the gearshift-

CRASH!

It plows forward and smashes into the back wall, splintering wood, tearing-

CRACK!

Ed stabs a tire iron into the engine through a ventilator slit- it jams a moving part and kills the engine-

Silence.

CUT TO:

205 BACK WALL

A small gap has been torn in the back wall by the cultivator. An ET arm reaches in, then Skar's head. Ed rushes over with a board, swings- Skar ducks out just in time.

HISS! A sizzling of wood from above-

CUT TO:

206 CEILING

the hissing is from a hot ray of light that is burning a square patch in the roof-

GRAM

(off) Edward! They're sneaking in!

CUT TO:

207 BACK WALL

ET arms reach in, pulling on boards to enlarge the opening. WHACK! WHACK! Ed smacks at them with his board and they withdraw. There is a huge CRACK! from above- he looks up-

CUT TO:

208 CEILING

two tentacle arms lift the cut patch of roof off and toss it aside. Light shines down through the hole into the shed. The tentacles drop in-

CUT TO:

209 SHED, FAMILY

clinging together, waiting for the end-

CUT TO:

210 BACK WALL

Skar and Hoodoo wriggle in through the opening and approach the family, eyes burning- then stop in their tracks.

There is a distant NOISE, low, RUMBLING, like the gathering of tremendous winds. The light above the shed begins to flicker.

cont.

210

cont.

We TRACK in to the faces of the ET's as they listen-

The walls begin to tremble. There is a change in the quality of the light from above.

The RUMBLING gets more intense. Skar gives a single BARK and he and Hoodoo each grab hold of a tentacle. The tentacles zip up through the ceiling, hauling the ET's out, and the light from above whizzes away.

The trembling intensifies, then there is a huge, air-shattering CONCUSSION, like the whole night has been stomped on by a giant foot.

Silence. Stillness.

A strange light comes through the cracks in the wall boards. There is a creak- Jaybird stands on the tire, unbarring the door.

TESS

Jaybird, no!

He pushes the door- it swings open. A different breed of ET, this one tall and CYPRESS shaped, stands facing them in the yard. It has eyes and a nose but no mouth. Behind it, standing still in the air, is a huge metallic ship.

Jaybird rushes toward the figure-

TESS

Jaybird!

The boy stops dead in front of the figure, then turns to face his family, who have come out in front of the shed, terrified, awestruck. Cypress clamps his huge hand on the back of Jaybird's neck, looks at the family.

Jaybird opens his mouth wide. He makes primitive grunting and moaning sounds at first. His eyes seem to focus on his family with real connection for the first time. He struggles, a word comes out-

JAYBIRD

Ahh- ah- I-

TESS

Jaybird-

cont.



210

cont.

JAYBIRD

I am come.

Jaybird proceeds to speak for the alien, the sentences broken, with strange rhythms and emphases. Tears roll down his cheeks as he talks-

JAYBIRD

I am come. There has been a hurting.  
 There has been a hurting. This place.  
 There has been- this is a sorrow. A  
 sorrow. Many of us not-you. Many.  
 Many kinds. A sorrow. This is not-  
 again. We are seeing. This is- hurting  
 is not-again. This is needed. We are  
 many not-you. We watch. We take- we  
 take. We know you. Across time we  
 know you. Across time we watch. We  
 take- this hurting is not-again. You  
 again are alone. Alone from not-you.  
 Across time you will know.

Cypress takes his hand off and Jaybird stops speaking.  
 Jaybird tugs his arm, looks up to him pleadingly.  
 The alien looks back, nods, then replaces its hand.

Jaybird looks directly at Tess-

JAYBIRD

He loves you.

Jaybird turns one by one to Watt, Ruth, Ed, Gram,  
 fixing their eyes-

JAYBIRD

(to Watt) He loves you.

(to Ruth) He loves you.

(to Gram) He loves you.

(to Ed) He loves you.

Jaybird gives a violent shudder and falls to his knees.  
 Cypress seems to drift back from him without moving  
 his legs-

cont.

210

cont.

A light descends from the ship, falling softly, slowly, like a pill falling in water, floating down to envelop Cypress. The light spreads like liquid, then flashes electrically-

There is another huge CONCUSSION of air, and then it is gone.

Jaybird kneels alone in the yard, shivering from the cold. Tess runs to him-

RUTH

It said something terrible is going to happen. The one in the house- something terrible, he said.

ED

It's over now, honey. They're gone. It's done with.

Watt walks out into the yard, dazed, and looks up in the sky-

WATT

I bet they took Kelso. Took him to the Dog Star.

CUT TO:

211

EXT. YARD, MORNING

a few chickens up and about, running loose. We start at the tractor shed, back wall bulging where the cultivator hit it, the patch of roof that was cut out shattered on the ground, and TRACK across the yard to the house, passing the smashed piano. We approach the back of the house, seeing the pushed-in door and torn-out windows. We see Ed inside, tacking a piece of screening over the window hole-

CUT TO:

212

INT. KITCHEN

Gram is scrubbing the kitchen- cabinets, oven, floor, everything. Ruth is washing dishes, all of them-

GRAM

Be sure and get the pots and pans too.

cont.

214

## JAYBIRD'S ROOM

Jaybird is into the finger-paints again, sitting on the floor spreading yellow on his hand. He has Buddie's celestial map on the floor before him. Tess talks to him from her room-

TESS

(off) You'll be fine, honey.  
Just fine. They're sposed to have  
all kinds of programs at the school.  
You'll like it.

Jaybird begins to paint yellow circuit-designs over the celestial map-

CUT TO:

215

## TESS'S ROOM

Tess finishes packing her suitcase-

TESS

And I'll come see you as often as  
I can. It'll be better for both  
of us, you'll see.

She hefts the suitcase. We FOLLOW her into Jaybird's room. She puts the suitcase down, looks at him-

TESS

You aren't gonna forget who I am,  
are you Jaybird?

Jaybird looks back at her, seeming to understand that she's going to leave. He sits at his table in front of the checkerboard. He moves a piece out of its row. He moves another and another, staining them with yellow paint from his fingers. He gets up, leaving them all out of order, and sits on his bed facing the wall-

TESS

I'll miss you so much.

Ed steps into the room-

ED

I'm going into Love's office, give  
him the story. We might be able to  
keep this out of the papers.

Uh-huh.

TESS

cont.

215

cont.

ED

I don't want people- I don't know.  
I don't want them in our lives.  
No matter what happened.

TESS

Daddy, after things are all back  
to normal here-

ED

You're gonna take that scholarship.

TESS

I'll visit home an awful lot.

ED

If I can figure out what to tell  
the insurance company we'll get  
you a new piano to practice on.

TESS

(smiles) You see Von tell him  
I'll be in for lunch. I got to  
pack.

Tess goes back into her room. Ed turns to Jaybird-

ED

You like to come to town?

No response from Jaybird-

ED

We could stop at Spradlin's, give  
you some time on that Rocketride.  
You like that, don't you?

No response from Jaybird. Ed moves to him, takes his  
hand-

ED

Come on, son.

CUT TO:

216

YARD

Ed and Jaybird cross the yard, Ed holding Jaybird by  
the hand. Jaybird looks up into the sky-

CUT TO:

217

SKY

A hawk soars above, hunting-

CUT TO:

218

RANGE

We TRACK along with the hawk's shadow as it crosses the empty prairie. It flies quite a ways. Finally we come to Buddee, who stands looking up at it. He still has a trace of blue on his face, a few cuts from his fight. He peers up, shading his eyes with his hand. He begins to walk across the range, looking lost. We PULL BACK slowly into an AERIAL SHOT until he is a tiny figure crossing an enormous expanse of empty range, a solitary stranger in a strange land.

CREDITS